

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

SECRETARY LAWRENCE S. EAGLEBURGER

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Q: To begin with your service in the State Department, I see that you were immediately sent to Tegucigalpa in Honduras, which, as we all know, is a country that's had a very difficult history. Of apparently greater interest is your assignment as a political analyst in the intelligence section, relating to the affairs in Cuba. Did you have any matters of interest at that point that you were engaged in?

EAGLEBURGER: Yes. When I was in INR on the Cuban political desk, it was, as you indicated, the time of the Bay of Pigs. I was not knowledgeable about the event and the plans leading up to the event; I learned about it when everyone else did, when it was reported in the news that there had been an invasion of Cuba. I made the mistake, perhaps, of predicting that it wouldn't succeed, which in the first 24 hours made me very unpopular in the Department, but later on I was a bit more popular.

In terms of items of interest with regard to the Bay of Pigs invasion, I think probably the events that stick in my mind that may be of some interest were the Kennedy Administration's attempts, as it became obvious that the Bay of Pigs invasion was not going to work, to try to deal with the situation in the aftermath of the obvious potential failure. It's a long time ago, but I do recall, for example, that Kennedy became very unhappy with the Department very early on after the invasion was failing, and largely took events out of the hands of the people in the Department of State at senior levels. I remember that Ted Achilles was, I think, at that time counselor of the Department, and that he and the Inter-American Affairs Assistant Secretary-I cannot remember who that was-and, in fact, Dean Rusk, on occasion, would meet. Don't ask me to describe the issues on which they were meeting, because at this point I can't recall. As an FSO-6 in INR, I was not in on a lot of those, anyway.

Q: INR being the intelligence section of the State Department.

EAGLEBURGER: Correct. Again, it was some days after the invasion itself, but before it had totally collapsed, Kennedy imposed a fellow named Richard Goodwin on the Department from the White House, and he largely took over what, I suppose, would now be described as crisis management. The Department officers, particularly Ted Achilles, as I recall, were largely shoved aside, and Goodwin, who was 30 years old if he was a day, and knew about as much about foreign policy as my Aunt Tilly, was put in charge of the management of the crisis. I do recall a number of papers being written for the President on how he should consider extricating himself from the mess. I do not recall at this point the substance of the papers themselves. What sticks out in my mind is the degree to which the Department was shoved aside and the management was centered in the White House, basically with Goodwin.

I'm trying to remember if there were any specific events at the time that would stand out. I can't think of any. The only thing at this point I recollect with any clarity is the degree to which the Department of State did not manage the aftermath of the crisis, and my relatively sure conviction that with the exception, probably, of Dean Rusk and the Under Secretary, which I guess was George Ball, I suspect that no one in the Department, or at least not very many people in the Department, had any idea that the Bay of Pigs invasion was planned in the first place. The Under Secretary for Political Affairs, maybe. I don't even remember who that was. But I am absolutely certain that ARA, the Latin American bureau, did not have any knowledge of the invasion until it had taken place.

I guess that's about all that sticks in my mind at this point about those events.

Q: Having spent eight years in Yugoslavia, four years as economic officer, and four years as ambassador in the period from '63, would you like to comment on your experience there, particularly in relation to our Soviet policy during that period?

EAGLEBURGER: There are a number of things with regard to Yugoslavia that I could comment on, and I'll come to the Soviet question in a minute. But to me, one of the most interesting aspects of the Yugoslav time in both incarnations was watching, and is watching, a Marxist-Communist system try to cope with the inadequacies of that system. The period from '62 to '65, when I was there the first time, in the economic section, was really an early attempt at what has become known as "worker self-management," which is really a Yugoslav attempt to hand over the management of enterprises in the country to the workers. It was, and continues to be, an aspect of a Yugoslav attempt to find ways to make an inefficient system more efficient, and it bears some relationship, I've discovered in later years, both to lessons that the Chinese have tried to learn in the process of what they're now engaged in, and which also may give us some insights into Mr. Gorbachev's problems now in the Soviet Union.

Essentially, I come away from that eight years largely convinced that the system, a Marxist-Communist system such as we find in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and less and less in China, is not capable of reform in any meaningful economic sense. I'm not even talking about the political side, because I would argue that there has been substantial reform in Yugoslavia on the political side, and substantial change and reform on the economic side, but that the limits on the ability to change the system-I think the Yugoslav case, which, in a sense, has been going on since about the mid-'50s-demonstrates that with the best will in the world, if you remain within the basic parameters of the Marxist philosophy, the limits on your ability to make meaningful reform are fairly substantial. And therefore, it is unlikely-certainly the Yugoslav case proves it up to this point-it is unlikely that the reforms can take place unless you are prepared substantially to move away from the philosophical givens of Marxism.

Q: Would you comment on the effectiveness or the success of a part of the United States AID program with Yugoslavia, particularly from the economic point of view?

EAGLEBURGER: There are two aspects. The first, the military assistance in the aftermath of the break with Moscow, was absolutely critical to Tito's ability to continue to maintain an independent course. There was a fairly substantial amount of military aid given, both in terms of ground equipment and air equipment, which I think even the Yugoslavs today would admit was critical to Tito's ability to continue to maintain his independence. The economic side, by and large, was a success, particularly on the agricultural side, where what we did substantially improved the Yugoslav situation, even with the limits of a collectivized system. Our aid had a great deal to do with providing the Yugoslavs with the means over the course of about a decade, to become relatively self-sufficient in wheat, corn.

One of the things that the eight years in Yugoslavia also taught me is the limits of American ability to deal creatively with countries which have a system antithetical to ours, and which for geopolitical reasons more than anything else, have to take positions on a number of issues which appear to be substantially contrary to our own in the U.N., for example. At the same time, I am convinced now and have been for years, that fundamentally, the Yugoslavs, including the Yugoslav government and the party, recognize that their long-term interests rest with the West, not with the East.

Yet in the time I was there during [George] Kennan's period as ambassador, we went through a real agony; the Senate and the House, at one point took away most-favored nation treatment from Yugoslavia because they were unhappy with the way in which the Yugoslavs were conducting themselves within the non-aligned movement. That didn't last long and we got most-favored nation treatment back. We had similar problems with regard to the supply of arms to the Yugoslavs. After having distanced themselves from the Soviets, they began to move a bit closer to the Soviets in the Khrushchev period, and we ended our arms supply.

We have an inability to manage the nuances of foreign policy when it comes to questions such as dealing with a country like Yugoslavia, which clearly, if you look at it over a 40-year period, has moved substantially away from the Soviets, both in terms of its political views and, indeed, in terms of the way in which it organizes itself internally. Yet because it calls itself Marxist and Communist, there has been a less than steady pace in terms of the way we've reacted and responded to the Yugoslavs.

In the Chinese case, we seem to have learned our lesson to some degree, and are being a good bit more creative than we were in the early days of the Yugoslav break with Moscow. One of the factors that concerned me when I left the Foreign Service, and continues to concern me, is our inability to separate ourselves on occasion from the rhetoric and look at the realities of the relationship.

Q: You were assigned to be Special Assistant to Dean Acheson, the former Secretary of State. Could you tell us something about what went on there?

EAGLEBURGER: President Johnson asked Dean Acheson to come back into the Department to be special advisor to him, that is to the President, at the time that De Gaulle decided to pull France out of the integrated command structure of NATO. I ended up being Acheson's assistant during that period.

First of all, I developed tremendous respect and affection for someone I think is one of the greats of American foreign policy in the 20th century, Acheson was, even in those years, and that was when he was in his early '70s and had long since left the government, a superb human being and clearly substantially more capable of coherent thought than most of those around him in the Johnson administration.

He took a very tough view of how the US ought to react to the De Gaulle move, and recommended that the administration ought to take sanctions against France: we should, he argued, state that we were unprepared to carry out our defense commitment under the NATO treaty since France had removed itself from the military structure. None of these recommendations were accepted by the President, by the way, and indeed, Dean Rusk didn't agree with most of Acheson's recommendations. Bob McNamara, to my recollection, didn't either, and it was a very frustrating time for Acheson.

While it is true that most of his recommendations were not accepted, it was also interesting to watch, because it was only because Acheson was there pushing and, in effect, on occasion proposing some pretty stringent reactions that the administration was forced to think through how, in fact, it would deal with the crisis. So Acheson, though not the man who developed the policy, forced the administration to take a hard look at some real questions.

Part of the thing about the Acheson period that interested me most was watching Acheson deal with the President of the United States. He had supported Lyndon Johnson for President when Kennedy got the nomination, largely because, as he himself told me, he had such distrust for John Kennedy and felt he was less than up to the task. In fact, he one time described John Kennedy as reminding him of "an amateur boomerang-thrower practicing his art in a crowded room." So he was close to Johnson. But with all of that, the period when he came back into the government was difficult for him, and particularly difficult because he and Johnson did not get along well.

Just one anecdote, not that it adds anything to history. I remember one time there was a discussion with Johnson, Rusk, Ball, and McNamara in the White House. I had told Acheson I would wait for him outside at the southwest Executive Avenue entrance and he could brief me on what had gone on, and we could figure out what we were going to do next. He was driving his own car, and he pulled out, and I got in the car, and he was crying. Tears were running down his cheeks. I said, "Mr. Secretary, what in the world is wrong?"

He said, "Larry, I hate to tell you, but I have just told off the President of the United States." I learned later from George Ball, I think it was, that, in fact, Acheson had gone up one side and down the other of Lyndon Johnson. They'd had a real battle. But what impressed me, and what I have seen a lot less of in later generations in Washington, is the degree to which Acheson venerated the office of the President. He was crying because he had had a battle with the President. and had shown less respect for the President than he thought, in the aftermath, he should have shown.

Other than that, I have a lot of fun anecdotes about the time with Acheson, but again, I think none of them are particularly relevant here.

Q: Many of our statesmen, senators such as Senator Lugar, recently, when he was Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee when Reagan took over the White House, have made remarks about our policy, not taking into account the limitation of our resources, the promises we have made, the commitments we have made, without regard to the ability to carry them out, to go back as far as Walter Lippmann and his remarks about the Truman Doctrine when it was announced in that critical period of the Cold War with the Soviets. Would you like to remark about the influence of the people who are outside of the government and outside of the White House on that?

EAGLEBURGER: Let me make a general comment first. Managing a coherent foreign policy is never easy. It is particularly difficult in a democracy. I come away from my time in the State Department convinced that it's beyond our capability as a country over any period of time to, manage a very coherent foreign policy. I think we simply have to accept that fact since I don't argue that we ought to do away with our democracy, although I do think with a little thought and care, we could be substantially less incoherent than we are.

I suppose there is a legitimate point that we overextend ourselves, that we take on commitments which we then are unwilling to meet. It is much more that than that we are incapable of meeting the commitments. The resources are there if, in fact, the will is there; the issue is very much one of will.

The Vietnam War made a difficult situation far more difficult. It largely destroyed the credibility of the elite which had, to some degree, managed foreign policy thinking, at least for a long period of time prior to Vietnam. There is no question, having lived through the Vietnam agony and been involved in the final denouement, that the period thereafter was much more difficult. It's still much more difficult, although I would have to argue that the Reagan presidency, up to the time of the Iran contra affair, at least, had to some degree restored the ability of the executive to manage foreign affairs. I think a lot of that's been undone by the Iran contra business.

But to me, the fundamental question is much more institutional than it is personal, and none of that is to say that personalities don't make a large difference. Bill Fulbright, certainly, given his tremendous stature in the Senate, made a difference in terms of our ability over time to continue the Vietnam War. Bob McNamara, who I have great admiration for, nevertheless, as Secretary of Defense, was so capable that he overwhelmed those within the government who had doubts in the early days of the Kennedy and Johnson Administration about the Vietnam War. He was just so much more efficient, so much more capable, that less articulate, in the long run, more correct people were overwhelmed. He made a big difference, and when he finally decided that Vietnam was a lost cause, it virtually destroyed Lyndon Johnson.

Henry Kissinger. I'm prejudiced on the subject, and I don't deny it, but Kissinger, unlike most of the occupants of the Office of the Secretary of State or National Security Advisor, with the possible exception of Dean Acheson and George Marshall, and I think even exceeding them, had a conceptual approach to foreign policy which is unusual and atypical in this country. I mean by that, that the pieces fit together in his mind. When he took Step A, he could reasonably well predict that Step K down the road was related to it in the following 12 ways. He had a much more European conceptual approach to the conduct of foreign affairs than most Americans do. His failing was that he never really understood the American democracy, never really understood the fact that you had to have popular support- that was an issue that he didn't think much about. I think he would probably concede that today if you could get him in a room with the door closed and nobody else in the room with you.

But there is no question that if you look at the foreign policy of the Nixon Administration-and I in no way denigrate Nixon's own monumental capabilities, in terms of conceptualizing a foreign policy. Kissinger and Nixon-and don't ask me to sort out which-together, they largely are responsible for the shift in our attitude toward China and our policy toward China. Henry clearly, to some degree ad hoc'ing it, clearly changed our relationships in the Middle East and knew, as he proceeded, that one step would follow on another; he knew where he was going, where too often, in my judgment, American foreign policy managers can perhaps see one more step down the road than the one they've just taken. That, by the way, leads to a great deal of the problem with the Congress.

I'm trying to think of some other people who have made a difference. George Ball made a difference in terms of US attitudes towards Western Europe for quite a period of time because he was himself committed to the concept of a unified Western Europe and committed to the concept of American support for it. I suspect without a George Ball pushing and shoving a reluctant bureaucracy, there would have been less support at an early stage for the building of Europe. The Europeans have succeeded, until very recently, in screwing up the process, but they're back at it again. But George Ball made a difference.

I came away from my time in the State Department reasonably pessimistic about the ability of the United States to manage what I think is an ever more complex process, in part because the presidency is no longer as omnipotent in the field of foreign affairs as it was, and for good reason, and in part because we as a country are no longer quite so sure what it is we want and what it is we're about with regard to foreign policy. Going into the 21st century is going to be very difficult, because we're not capable of managing those complexities with any great skill. In my judgment, even in the 20-some years I was in the State Department, we went downhill in that regard; by the time I retired from the Department, we were less capable of coherence than we were when I entered.

Q: With relation to that, the changeover from intelligence activities, as Schlesinger points out, the CIA became an activist operation instead of, broadly speaking, research. Has that had a serious effect?

EAGLEBURGER: Sure. I think that's made a difference. I would argue that the most fundamental difference is what's happened to the role of the National Security Council, the National Security Advisor, the National Security Council staff. I think that's even more fundamental than the CIA, and I'll come back to the CIA in a minute. But let me put it this way. When I was in the NSC the first time, when Walt Rostow was NSC advisor, I don't think Walt had the intellectual candle power of Henry Kissinger by any means. But he had a man working for him, for whom I worked, Francis Bator, who handled Western Europe and international economic affairs, who always, I thought, did the job about as well as anyone could. His concept was that the President needed to have all of the alternatives put to him as clearly and precisely as he could, and then Francis would tell the President, as well, what he thought himself, but only after he had made it clear, "This is what Dean Rusk thought; this is what Bob McNamara thought; here are some options that nobody had thought about, and Mr. President, you need to look at them all." Walt Rostow didn't do that with regard to Vietnam and some of the other areas, so I can't argue that Walt Rostow was in every respect an ideal National Security advisor. But I can say that the Secretaries of State and Defense carried a good bit more weight in those days than they did in Henry Kissinger's time, and I'll talk about that in a second.

My point is that the National Security Council staff, in its best days, was the policeman of the departments in terms of making sure that all the alternatives were there. It acted as devil's advocate on occasion, but it did not substitute its own judgments for those of the departments of the government, though it would certainly have a right to tell the President what it thought.

We move on to Kissinger's time, and in part, again, because the intellectual center of gravity was certainly not in the State Department but in the NSC.

Q: I noticed in your bio data, you referred to the coup of taking over foreign policy into the National Security Council.

EAGLEBURGER: Henry would argue today that it was not the wise thing to do. Again, this is critical: National Security staffs operate the way Presidents want them to operate. National Security advisors operate the way Presidents want them to. Nixon wanted it in the White House, not in the State Department, but Henry was so capable that the center of gravity very clearly shifted with regard to the conceptualization and, indeed, the implementation of foreign policy.



You can argue, I suppose, that when you have a President who is as adept as Nixon at foreign policy, and a National Security advisor who is as-I'll use the term "wise" as Kissinger was, intelligent as Kissinger was, you can make the system work. But I think we have seen in the last several years what happens when the National Security advisor and his staff continue to be *primus inter pares*, in terms of the determination of foreign policy directions and then in carrying it out. When you're dealing with a C+ or a B- fellow in that job, you get into terrible, terrible trouble, so that the prejudice, has to be that that is not the place that you try to formulate, much less implement, foreign policy. Foreign policy in the hands of an Ollie North ought to scare us to death. That will happen again if the structure is again permitted to develop as it did in Reagan's second term.

So to me, in response to your question, one of the most potentially dangerous aspects is the question of the uncertainty of the role of the National Security advisor.

CIA, yes. I think there is no question that we've gotten into a lot of trouble by mixing intelligence analysis with clandestine operations. For example. I would argue that the Bay of Pigs is, in fact, a consequence of this mixing.

I happen to believe there's a place both for clandestine operations and an absolute necessity for the proper kind of analysis that's done by the analytical side of the CIA, I'm not in the position of arguing that the clandestine side of the CIA ought to be done away with, nor do I necessarily believe that it ought to be a totally separate establishment. But having said that, I'm also prepared to concede to you that you have a 20- to 25-year trend which has moved us away from the absolutely essential analysis of intelligence, so that the decision makers can be told, without prejudice on the part of those who are doing the analysis, what's going on. And it is a dangerous tendency and a dangerous trend.

Either you do away with the clandestine side of the CIA, which I would not like to see happen, or you simply have to be very, very careful about the kind of person you make CIA director, and that means you don't appoint Bill Casey. In Yugoslavia, after a particular problem developed, I told them (CIA agents) they were all to stay in their homes and not any of them even to come into the office. Admiral [Stansfield] Turner and Frank Carlucci practically had heart attacks, but by God, they changed the way they did business with me from then on.

Q: In my own experience, I find that the people in the embassy get to a point where they rely on the CIA instead of doing their own work. Have you got any comment on that?

EAGLEBURGER: I didn't see too much of that. Mind you, I haven't had the experience in running embassies that you have. I've only been ambassador to Belgrade. I didn't see that in the embassy in Belgrade, and indeed, I would have to say that the CIA people in the embassy in Belgrade were, by and large, of pretty high quality and pretty careful. My problems with the agency had to do with instructions from Washington to the station chief in Belgrade. On the occasion in question-not only he, it was a broadcast directive to the station chiefs around the world, I am told. I don't even remember specifically what it was with regard to, other than it was that a number of items were not to be told to the ambassador.

I learned about it when I went back on consultation and went into the Department. Ben Reed, who was then the Under Secretary for Management, told me about it, so I went back to Belgrade and asked my station chief if it were true. He didn't lie; he said yes, it was true. I said, "Fine. I want you to send a message back to Admiral Turner and Frank Carlucci, and tell them that you are out of business in Yugoslavia until such time as that order is rescinded. I mean by that, you're not to come into the office, and you're not to conduct any business in Belgrade or in Yugoslavia; you are simply to close up shop as soon as you send the message back telling the CIA that's what's happened."

I think it took about a week and the order was rescinded.

In many ways, I'm an admirer of the Agency. Any good Agency person that I ever knew would have reversed your point in a way and admitted that the Agency depends very much on Foreign Service reporting. Don't hold me to the percentage figures, but I've been told on a number of occasions that somewhere between 75% and 85% of the intelligence data they use in their analysis comes from the Foreign Service reporting. Now, you can run into Foreign Service officers, I'm sure, who let the Agency do their work for them, but I didn't see much of that. Maybe it depends on what bureau you're with, I guess.

Q: Can we go to the period when you were in charge of management in the State Department? Do you have any comment on the operation of the Department, considering its objectives as far as the training of the people or experience, and the famous question about political appointees and the superior officers who come in within an administration?

EAGLEBURGER: I left that management job convinced of several things. First of all, I thought then, and I still think, that by and large, the Department does a pretty good job of training, particularly language training. I think we do it as well as anybody. But we do not have the tradition of training in the way the military does. In fact, there is within the profession itself, I think, a reluctance to take these times out, because they think it hurts their career moves, they're out of circulation for a while. But by and large, on the training side, I think we're not bad.

I also was convinced that also, by and large, the raw material the American Foreign Service has is better than anybody else's, including the Soviets and the British, who are often compared with us.

I also thought we did a lousy job of personnel management. Our assignment procedures got more and more complicated, and a lot of this is a consequence of what I guess I would describe as the opening up of bureaucracy to the light of day, which most people think has been a good thing. I don't. That is not to say that the old Foreign Service that we've all heard about, the Foreign Service of the period when George Kennan was a junior Foreign Service officer, didn't have a great many injustices within the system, and a lot of people were badly hurt and had no right of appeal and no way to deal with the problem. There was, I am sure, an old-boy network that managed the Department and the Foreign Service, and all of that has been criticized.

But what I saw developing when I was Under Secretary for Management-and it's gotten much worse since-is, for example, one of the real strengths of the Foreign Service when I came into it, I think, was the selection-out process. And it worked when I came in. While it's still on the books, it no longer works at all, because you can tie the Department up in the courts for years, and in the long run, usually you will lose, the Department will lose, when it comes to a test case in the courts on whether someone should be selected out.

The argument is, "That's because the personnel records aren't adequately kept," and so forth. The fact of the matter is that more and more, the Foreign Service has become a victim of legislation which is aimed at protecting government employees. I'm prepared to concede that. But I think as a result, the ability of the Department to maintain discipline, the ability of the Department to assign people as it sees fit, rather than get into a negotiation with the person as to what embassy he's going to serve in, has substantially deteriorated.

When I was Deputy Under Secretary for Management, I was the fellow that introduced the open assignment system. I wish I had never done it. But when it was done, all we were saying was, "Officers ought to have a right to know what jobs are available, and ought to be able to bid for them. But it will be the Department that decides who goes where." Since I left, in negotiations with AFSA [American Foreign Service Association - the "union" of the Foreign Service], the Department has, in effect, conceded that there is a negotiation that must go on between the assigned officer and the Department. As a consequence, it becomes increasingly difficult to assign people, particularly to the difficult jobs.

There are also societal problems that have clearly made a difference. The married working couple makes the assignment process much more difficult; the role of spouses in terms of employment abroad and so forth, makes life a lot more difficult. But by and large, I would have to say the Foreign Service is nowhere near the disciplined Service that I think it was 20 or 25 years ago. I think that's too bad. That is not to say that I think that the Foreign Service is not worth anything; I still think it's a good Foreign Service. But management is much more difficult; morale, I think, is worse; and I see little hope that that's going to change.

With regard to the question of political appointees, on this I am not popular with my Foreign Service colleagues, because by and large, I don't care that much, with some caveats. To my way of thinking, it is far more important that good Foreign Service officers get the important jobs in the Department than it is that they have a lock on a lot of embassies. Again, don't get me wrong. I would prefer to see good Foreign Service officers appointed ambassador than some political hack who is going to Ireland because his grandmother was Irish. I'm not arguing that point. But I have seen a lot of quite capable political appointees. I've also seen some real turkeys. But I can reverse the process. I've seen some very good Foreign Service officer ambassadors; I've seen some that aren't so good.

One thing I will say. This is a comment I don't think Henry Kissinger would want me to repeat, but since I agree with it. Henry came to the conclusion that a senior Foreign Service officer-again, recognizing there would be exceptions, but as a generalization, a senior Foreign Service officer had, to quote him, "one good fight in him." He meant by that, take an ambassador in country X which becomes a political hot spot, and the ambassador becomes a political target back home. Let me give an example: Chile at the time of Allende and thereafter, where the political process in the US engendered tremendous debate about what the ambassador did or didn't do, and was he being devious or was he honest. The occupant of the embassy, because he worries about the damage he has already suffered, is much less prepared to fight hard the second time. I don't deny that that's a generalization that has exceptions, as I've indicated, but I do feel there is some merit to that contention. Therefore, if the Foreign Service is going to get the jobs, it needs to be prepared to put its neck on the block, and it needs to accept the fact that one embassy may be all they will get. That's very easy to say. We're all human; it doesn't work that way.

All I'm really trying to say with regard to this is that there are some arguments that can be made by some basically sympathetic outsiders, and Henry Kissinger, basically, is a sympathetic viewer of the Foreign Service. There are some arguments that can be made by those people, which are not altogether wrong. On the other hand, it is the height of absurdity, I think, to argue, as Ambassador Galbraith-not the Harvard Galbraith, but Evan Galbraith, who was in Paris-has argued, that the Foreign Service should not get senior embassies and certainly should not get senior jobs in the Department because they don't represent the views of the President; they represent the views of the institution.

I've debated Galbraith on Bill Buckley's program on the subject. Larry Silverman, who preceded me in Belgrade, made the same argument in a Foreign Affairs article, and I think it's clap-trap. I think it's clap-trap for several reasons, the first of which is that by and large, the political appointee who, in fact, may be well known by the President, knows the President's thinking in any intimate detail perhaps for the first six months he's in his embassy, if he's lucky. The President's views change as he is in Washington living with reality; the ambassador's may not. So that this claim that you know what the President's thinking and how he reacts to issues, I think it's nonsense.

Secondly, the argument that you have to be responsive to the President, while it sounds good, also means if you're not careful, precisely what I was talking about earlier, that there is no coherence or consistency to American foreign policy at all. I think if you look at what Presidents think when they come into office and what they think about foreign policy when they leave, you will find that they have shifted toward what was probably the consensus view when they walked into the office in the first place. All that really says is that the reality of working with the problem over a number of years often demonstrates that the problem has certain answers, certain parameters, and that those don't change just because a new President walks into office with a different view of how you ought to deal with the problem.

Again, if I'm not careful, I'm going to be arguing that the permanent bureaucracy really ought to be making the political decisions that should rest in the hands of the President; that is not what I'm arguing. But what I am arguing is that the Foreign Service brings to the conduct of American foreign policy an essential consistency, an institutional memory, a coherence that, while it may in its essence be contrary to some of the conceptions of democracy, nevertheless, is a factor that ought to be highly valued. As a consequence of that, this baloney that everybody should change at top level every time a new President comes in, is, in fact, simply arguing that what a President believes the minute he walks into office is not and should not be subject to experience as he continues in office. Experience is important, and the Foreign Service provides that.

Q: Relative to that somewhat, the remarks that Malcolm Toon, in the position where he was, he wasn't even consulted on some of the major activities and decisions in Washington. I'm sure you're familiar with this.

EAGLEBURGER: I am. "Mac" and I have talked about that a lot. Yes, there was no question.

Q: That does affect the Service in the extreme.

EAGLEBURGER: Sure. It cuts a couple of ways, too. I'm not going to argue too much with what "Mac" has said, because I think it's correct. Certainly in that period of time, the administration was doing some things with the Soviets that were pretty important, and there's no question that "Mac" Toon didn't know everything that was going on.

Now, there's no excuse for that. It shouldn't run that way, but there are some mitigating circumstances. I lived through part of it, so I think I know what I'm talking about. Number one, there is a legitimate concern about leaks. I don't want to overdo that; that's why I'm being cautious about how I say it. But there is a tendency in the Department at senior levels and in the White House, if you're dealing with something that is really touchy and important, to believe and, with some justice, that if the issue becomes known at too many levels in the Department or in the field, it isn't going to be too long before you're going to be reading about it.

I am prepared to concede the cliché that most junior Foreign Service officers will mouth at the first chance, that most of the leaks come from the top, not the middle or the bottom. I think that's true. On occasion, when somebody wants to stop a policy, however, you'd be amazed how many leaks you can get from the middle and the bottom.

But part of the concern in the "Mac" Toon case was, I think, over the question of leaks. Less acceptable as an argument, but nevertheless there, was the view that it was much more efficient to do it this way. You get things done faster, but you often also find that somebody might have told you you shouldn't do something. I mean, Iran-Contra is the classic case. It got done faster, and you see where we went.

So I can't debate the point, and it does affect morale and it does affect the ability of an ambassador to do his job. Political appointee ambassadors have been cut out at least as much as Foreign Service officers, but that also doesn't meet the point.

Q: In your service with Secretary Haig, you had the Malvinas problem. Would you care to comment on the substance of it, or some of the things which happened that left people somewhat . . .

EAGLEBURGER: Upset.

Q: "Upset" is right.

EAGLEBURGER: One of the things that I have been amused by for some period of time-"amused" is maybe the wrong term, but struck by-again, understand my prejudices as I come into this, but one of the worst consequences of Henry Kissinger as National Security advisor and as Secretary of State is the degree to which those who have followed have felt that they had to emulate him. I would say in watching "Zbig" Brzezinski in the Carter years, that he was spending half his time competing with Henry. There is no question in my mind that "Bud" McFarlane saw what he was doing with Iran as the latter day analogy with Kissinger in China. Indeed, "Bud" even wrote an article in the Washington Post shortly after the story on Iran broke, trying to make the comparison. I think there was, again, there's the Kissinger model, and "I'm going to do it at least as well, if not better."

To some degree, that was Al's problem on the-you say Malvinas. It's clear you spent a lot of time in Latin America. Let me say Falklands; I spent a lot of time in Europe.

Q: Four years in Argentina. (Laughs) I have no choice.

EAGLEBURGER: In the sense that, I think, looking back on it, though it was a courageous step on Haig's part to try, it was done without any of the careful work that Kissinger always did prior to getting himself engaged in an effort like this. Kissinger didn't march off to the Middle East until he was pretty sure in his own mind, through a lot of work beforehand, of one, what it was he was going to try to do, and secondly, that the ground was fertile for accomplishing it.

I want to be fair with Al Haig on this one, but I think Al, in part, again had that "shuttle diplomacy" model in his head, saw this as an opportunity to regain some lost ground with the administration, because he was in trouble already, and therefore, undertook an effort I am not sure was wise. Having said that, this again depends on your prejudices, I am sure, but since I believed from day one that we had no choice but to support the British in this effort, from my point of view, the Haig effort in Buenos Aires and with that goofy bunch of generals and admirals, and their inability to come to any compromise, set the stage for a total US support of the British.

I'm not now arguing the wisdom of the policy, although I happen to think that's where we should have come out, and I don't think this was what Al intended at all, but by getting engaged as he did and, to everyone's surprise, even getting "Maggie" [Margaret] Thatcher at one point to agree to a compromise solution, which Galtieri then couldn't accept or could accept one minute and couldn't accept the next, when that effort was over, there was simply no question at all, though Jeane Kirkpatrick and a few others might try to fight it, there was no question at all that we could sustain a total support for the British in retaking the islands.

What was interesting to me was how the bureaucracy shook out on this issue, the Latin America Bureau obviously being on one side, where it should be, and Tom Enders, who had spent most of his life in Europe, arguing ardently for the Argentine junta; Jeane Kirkpatrick, who was interested in Argentine training for anti-Sandinista types in Central America, and who had this sort of relationship with the Argentine junta anyway, arguing in support of a more balanced policy; and the rest of the establishment, particularly the Europeanists, wholly on the other side, and Reagan very quickly there, and in part because it is difficult to oppose "Maggie" Thatcher on anything.

To me, it's clear in the aftermath that Haig could not succeed, because it was clear and should have been clear to him earlier on that the Argentine junta simply could not accept anything other than total victory and continue in power.

So as a lesson in how to conduct foreign policy, I'm not sure that it's likely to be repeated. I did find it kind of fun to watch as it went on, but it did not have any of the essential underpinnings that Kissinger was so careful to have cultivated before he would get into a situation like this.

Let me give you one short anecdote which I found interesting. Lusinchi, who later became President of Venezuela, was visiting Washington during the height of this crisis, and I was then Under Secretary. He was then candidate for President. He came to see me, and he came into the office with his entourage, and went through the ritual, a ten-minute blast against the US for helping the British colonialists in the Malvinas, and I nodded and took it. Then as he was leaving, he got everybody else out of the office, he closed the door, he grabbed my arm, and he said, "Don't you let those generals and admirals win down there, because I've got generals and admirals in Venezuela, and I don't want them to get any of the wrong ideas."

Q: President Carter made a great presentation of his view of foreign policy in many of his speeches, and emphasized, with the help of some Columbia professors, that the foreign policy of the United States had to have a moral base, and should take into account moral values, not only as to human rights but from the overall objectives of our country. Would you remark on that?

EAGLEBURGER: Yes. In a minute, I'm going to say a nice word about it, so I'm not in the end as negative as I'm going to sound at the beginning. But my whole view of the proper anchors for American foreign policy starts from a substantial dislike for what I will call modern-day American imperialism, which is the imposition of our standards of conduct on the rest of the world. We get ourselves into terrible trouble in this regard if we're not careful.



South Africa, for me, is a classic case. We end up feeling good about what we say, and with no ability to affect the outcome. Or we end up getting ourselves involved in issues which, when put to the test, we will not be prepared to carry through because they will require the kind of intervention on our part which we are no longer enamored of. In other words, there is a tendency to talk a lot and to be involved in creating instabilities which, when we're faced with them, we are unprepared to try to deal with. So somebody else finds themselves in an unstable situation, to some degree thanks to our meddling. I really do believe there is legitimacy to the point that nations should not generally intervene in the internal affairs of others.

When Carter came in and I went off as ambassador to Yugoslavia, I was adamant that human rights issues were going to be dealt with by me behind closed doors with the Yugoslavs, and we weren't going to be out banging in public about the way they managed their internal affairs. By and large, I succeeded in maintaining that position for four years, including at one point telling Pat Derian that if she came to visit Belgrade, please let me know because I would be sure to be out of town. So she didn't come. I will say that on more than one occasion we got people out of jail and, by and large, I think ameliorated the way in which the Yugoslavs dealt with some of what I would describe the human rights problems. It is a much more humane system than most others, anyway, but they were more careful because there was some private work going on.

But I will say this. They were also more careful because Jimmy Carter was standing up day after day, in public, making an issue of the way in which governments dealt with their people. I never thought I'd concede this when the process was going on, but as I have looked back on it, Jimmy Carter's position on human rights, I think, the general articulation of it, not how he or his administration dealt with a particular case in Buenos Aires or Belgrade or Moscow or wherever, but his general articulation of the commitment of the American people to a standard of conduct on the part of governments with regard to their own people, I think changed the atmosphere and made it-this is an understatement, but made it embarrassing for governments to be perceived as cruel and inhuman to their citizens.

Even the Soviets, I think, have, to some degree, changed their conduct-I'm not now talking about Gorbachev, but even before that-changed their conduct, not because they wanted to, and not because the US Government banged on them on any particular case, but rather because the Carter Administration's constant references to human rights made it a legitimate issue of discussion and made it a point that people thought about when they thought about government X.

So I have to tell you that if I were an ambassador today, I'd have the same view about meddling in the internal affairs of the host government, but I would also have to say that we are probably better off as a nation in terms of the way we are perceived abroad, and a lot of people in a lot of different countries are probably better off because Jimmy Carter made an issue of it.

Pat Derian could be a monumental pain in the ass and, by and large, I think she did more damage to her cause than she did good, but the general concept, the general approach, I feel, was worthy of us. Therefore, I am prepared to concede that it was a useful exercise as a generalization. The ways in which it was implemented specifically in specific countries, where AID money was cut off if X wasn't done and so forth, that I have much less sympathy for. But as a general statement of what it is we are about as a country, I thought it was a worthwhile exercise. And it's now a part of the political lexicon; it didn't used to be.

Q: You were Under Secretary of Political Affairs during the beginning of the Nicaraguan operation. You applied those principles, obviously, to the Nicaraguan Government?

EAGLEBURGER: No. (Laughs) That's what I said at the beginning, as a generalization. I said in most cases, I do not believe the US ought to be intervening in the internal affairs of others. But there are exceptions, and those exceptions obviously are worthy or not, depending upon the eye of the beholder. I am not ever going to argue that the US never, under any circumstances, should intervene in the internal affairs of another state, any more than I would argue that political assassination is under any and all circumstances evil. If somebody put a bullet in Adolf Hitler's head in 1933, the world would have been far better off. Obviously, however, when you make those kinds of exceptions, the danger is that the exceptions become the rule, and excess follows on any sort of a qualification on a general principle.

But having said that, if an administration believes that the national security interests are gravely enough threatened in a particular country, then my rule goes out the window. Therefore, Nicaragua becomes a question not, I think, of whether intervention should or should not ever take place, but rather, is Nicaragua a sufficient threat to the national security interests of the United States to warrant an intervention?

There again, it is an issue open to debate. I would argue, myself, that we will some day regret the day that we decided to live with the Sandinistas, but I think it's also fairly clear that the political will does not exist in this country to do much about it. That is a reality that also has to be entered into the analysis of whether you're going to undertake an intervention, because if you are convinced that it's necessary, but you're also convinced you can't carry it out successfully because of the lack of political support at home, then you'd better find some other way to deal with the problem, or you'd better work very hard to generate the political support at home.

So I'm not arguing at all that the rule must always stand that we don't intervene, nor am I arguing, having made that exception to the rule, that therefore it will be very clear in what cases you should intervene and what cases you should not. I, for example, totally disagree with our meddling in the South African situation. I consider it to be meddling. And what's going on in the Congress right now, I think is dangerous and not going to succeed. Yet that doesn't mean I think apartheid's a good thing, but it does depend, to some degree, on your conviction of how important the issue is to your national security, and also a judgment of whether you succeed if you intervene, or whether you make the situation worse. Since there are a lot more blacks out of work than there were before we imposed the last sanctions, and since the Japanese now own a lot more of South Africa than they did before, I'm not at all sure that I think it's a successful policy.

But I'm wandering off the point. The point is that the general rule has to be that you don't intervene, but you also have to be prepared to make exceptions.

Q: You had a short tour as Assistant Secretary of Defense of ISA, International Security Affairs. Could you comment on the position or relationship of the Defense Department on foreign relations?

EAGLEBURGER: ISA, when I went there, had a long and glorious history of being public enemy number one to the State Department, and with good reason. It goes back to the McNamara era, again, where John McNaughton and Paul Warnke ran an ISA that was not only involved in advising the Secretary of Defense on foreign policy, but became very effective in furthering the Defense Department's views on foreign policy, to the great frustration of the State Department. By and large, my view is that ISA was more than it should have been, and that it is dangerous when the Defense Department gets so deeply engaged in the decision-making process on foreign policy issues.

But I also, then, after having spent a couple of years in ISA, first as a deputy assistant secretary, then after a period of time, as acting assistant secretary, I also came away with the view that the State Department is not particularly adept at getting its mind around the sorts of problems that the Defense Department has a legitimate concern about.

One of the things that bothers me most about the structure of our foreign policy-making process, and not at all improved while I was back in the Department in the Under Secretary job and had to deal with Richard Perle and "Cap" Weinberger, neither one of whom I have any particular use for, there are two areas of foreign policy formulation that I think are crying out for some change. One is, in fact, the fit between defense policy and foreign policy, and some ways need to be found to provide a far more effective analysis for decision makers of how those issues fit and what policy best furthers the combined interest.

The Defense Department-State Department relationship, as it relates to foreign policy questions and the use of force and those areas in which the Defense Department has a legitimate concern, like bases in Greece and the Philippines and wherever, those kinds of issues are not well dealt with.

The other on which I'm equally frustrated is the whole question of international economic policy, where the State Department less and less has an important role to play. I will say I thought when George Shultz came into the Department, having been Secretary of the Treasury and clearly a man who understood economics-and there haven't been many Secretaries of State who thought of it as anything but a dismal science-I thought the State Department would get back into the business. The fact of the matter is, as far as I can tell, the State Department is almost totally irrelevant on the question of international economic and financial policy today. I feel more strongly about it in the economic area than I do in the defense area, but in both areas, we are not well structured to deal with these problems creatively and synergistically. Particularly on the economic side, there are going to be much more complicated problems in the future, and we're not even close to knowing how to deal with them.

Just one example is the whole international debt question. It scares me to death, and it's a political question; it's not a debt question. We are in the process of undermining the already less-than-deep support for democratic governments in Latin America, certainly, by demanding, with regard to the debt issue, that interest be paid, that the debt be serviced despite the impact in that country on the question of growth.

Prime Minister Edward Seaga of Jamaica is a good friend of mine, and I have watched that poor man struggle against Michael Manley for a long time. He hasn't helped himself much. I'm not saying that these countries are innocent, but we're going to get Michael Manley back as Prime Minister of Jamaica, largely because we haven't the wit to help Seaga crawl out from under the mess. And he's not the only one who faces that problem.

I'm way off the subject. It's just that I think both on the international economic side and on the defense side, our means of policy formulation, which take adequate account of the complex of foreign policy, economic policy, and defense policy issues, are not very good and are getting less and less adequate.

Richard Perle is an example of what I'm trying to say, in the sense that on arms control policy, where nobody can argue that the Defense Department doesn't have a legitimate interest-of course it does-but Richard Perle, one, because he's bright as hell, and, two, because he's negative as hell and had the total support of "Cap" Weinberger in this area, Richard Perle did more damage to the arms control process, largely because he was in the position of being able, consistently, to say no. There was no institutional way to overcome that veto power short of going to the President of the United States, and you can't go to the President of the United States every time you've got an issue of arms control policy that, though important, is not so important that you can bother the President with it.

We sat for months-well, totally in neutral, largely because we couldn't break that veto deadlock of Richard Perle's, who, on the other hand, then because in the INF negotiations, because he didn't think that the intermediate range weapons were important, anyway, and secondly, because he was convinced the Soviets would never accept, generated the zero outcome concept. He didn't generate it, but he grabbed hold of it and saw it as a great negotiating ploy. There are those of us who don't think zero outcome is necessarily a good idea. Again, that's not the issue.

My point is that he was able to convince Weinberger and then the President on an issue, because it was basically perceived that the Soviets could never accept it, he was able to convince the administration to adopt a policy which the State Department, Al Haig, certainly, was adamantly opposed to, not just for military reasons, but substantially for political reasons. I happen to think that's not a good way to run a railroad.

I think as a foreign policy conservative, you can't have lived next door to Henry Kissinger as long as I have and not be basically conservative on foreign policy. I think, as I've tried to indicate in some of my earlier comments, I'm nervous about some of the more recent penchants in the United States to try to impose our values on others, and I think that probably is conservative.

Anyway, the point with regard to the Pentagon looking upon me as the opposition, that goes back to the fact that Richard Perle and Fred Ikle and "Cap" Weinberger and I never got along in all the time I was in the European Bureau or in the Under Secretary job. I, by and large, thought that they were benighted right-wing nuts. So I may be conservative, but I'm not a right-wing nut, in my own judgment.

Example: It is the Pentagon that largely imposed the unwise policy of the pipeline sanctions against the West Europeans on the building of the pipeline to the Soviet Union. There was-and is-in the minds of-well, Perle, Iklī;½ and Weinberger have all left, thank goodness, but when they were there, they were the touchstone of what is described as conservative thought on foreign policy. I would describe it rather as a return to the days of unilateralism, which we long since should have learned is no longer a productive way to manage our foreign policy. So in that sense, the Pentagon and I didn't get along at all.

Q: Related to that, the business of not intervening in the domestic affairs or the internal affairs of a country, did you ever get into any discussion while you were in the State Department about the effectiveness of the UN, and whether there was sufficient support in this country to submit ourselves to the rule of the UN?

EAGLEBURGER: Never really very much, no. I have my own views on the subject, but it never really became much of an issue in the Department. The Reagan Administration was not particularly committed to a cooperative role within the United Nations, although neither were the Nixon and Ford Administrations, particularly. It's never really been an issue.

I think it's interesting. It's about to become an issue because the Soviets have begun to change the way in which they approach the U.N., and I think we're going to have to do some things whether we believe them or not, simply to make things appear a little bit more balanced. It is also becoming an issue, because all of a sudden, having argued that the U.N. should get involved in ending the Iran-Iraq War, we now find out they can't pay for it.

Clearly, whether it's [George] Bush or [Michael] Dukakis, we're going to have a different view of the U.N., but I suspect that it will never be a keystone of our foreign policy.

Q: You were in office in Washington during the period of the final days of Mr. Nixon. Did you participate in any of the tough decisions that were being made at that time?

EAGLEBURGER: (Laughs) The toughest decision was Nixon's, and I didn't have anything to do with that. But there are some comments, I think, to be made from the point of view of the impact on the conduct of our foreign policy from the whole Watergate era, and maybe some personal observations with regard to the time, too.

One of the things that I recall now with a great deal more equanimity than I did at the time is what was never really understood; the degree to which how the Watergate crisis, particularly in its final months, meant that if we had been put to the test somewhere in the foreign policy arena, we would not have been able to respond. We were a ship dead in the water.

One of the things I will always admire Henry Kissinger for, above almost everything else, is the degree to which the rest of the world, in general, and the Soviet Union, in particular, never really understood that. He played games with mirrors. If you recall, during a great deal of the difficult times of that crisis, he was off making peace in the Middle East and making it stick.

There is, for example, a time when during the '73 War, the Soviets threatened us. The Israelis were about to cut off the Egyptian Third Army in the Sinai, and the Soviets sent us a very tough message. One of the reactions that we took to that Soviet message was to go to DefCon 3. No one understands what DefCon 3 means; it's to raise our defense condition, which is quickly seen by the Soviets, because units go on alert and so forth and so on. Within 48 hours of our having gone on to that alert, the Soviets were back at us, telling us, "Oh, we didn't really quite mean what we were saying." They had sent us a very tough message. But it was within that same 48-hour period, and for weeks thereafter, the American press was saying this was all a game on Nixon's part because of the Watergate crisis, and he was trying to strengthen his own position.

You know, it doesn't take much of that to make the wise fellow in Moscow-and there weren't very many wise fellows in Moscow then, thank goodness-begin to understand that we were standing on sawdust back here. So that's just one example of the kinds of trauma that were constant. We were simply not in position to do very much if we had really been put to the test.

Another point. It is also because the President was so weak, we had a Secretary of State who probably was able to exercise more authority on his own than any Secretary of State in memory. There is no question that during that period of time, Henry did not, on many occasions, really go to the President and ask for authority; he just did. So it kind of cuts both ways, if you will. The Secretary of State was able to exercise substantially more independence than would normally have been the case, and that made for perhaps more efficient conduct of our foreign policy in one sense. But at the same time, it was clear that if we'd really been put to a test where the whole administration would have had to take a tough position, we would not have had much support at home.

I'm convinced that as difficult as it was to continue to maintain popular support for the Vietnam War, there is just no question in my mind at all-and it never will be able to be proved, but that if it had not been for Watergate, the administration could have carried on a substantially more effective response to the North Vietnamese violations of the agreement. Ford was, by then, President. But I'm not at all clear in my own mind that the North Vietnamese, who read us very well, would have been prepared to undertake the final invasion of South Vietnam, I think with the proper analysis that we would not react, had it not been for Watergate. I'm not saying that it is therefore the consequence of Watergate that Vietnam fell, but I am saying that I think the North Vietnamese would have been much more careful about how they would have dealt with the situation if Nixon had not gone down the tubes. We had a President who was, in Ford, prepared to react, but there was simply no support in the Congress or anywhere else for any reaction. I think that was not only a reaction to the Vietnam mess; it was also the tremendous weakening of the office of the presidency and the total public disaffection that came from Watergate.

So Watergate had a lot of consequences. Everybody talks about the collapse of foreign policy consensus that came from Watergate, and I admit there's no question that's true, although I think we can overdo the degree of consensus there was before Vietnam. But there is no question, I think, that Watergate had some fairly substantial impact, one, with regard to Vietnam, and I'll tell you another area where the aftermath of Watergate clearly had an impact. That is when, in late '75 and early '76, we tried to respond to Angola and got the Clark Amendment as a consequence, which said we could not support the [Jonas] Savimbi forces in Angola. There are those-I am one of them-who believe that in fact, our failure to respond to the Soviet support ...[end tape]There are some of us who are convinced that our failure to respond in Angola in '76 and, in fact, the congressional prohibition against doing anything in Angola, led Moscow to a conviction that their adventurism was going to be a free ride. I think it even set the stage for Afghanistan and any number of other Soviet activities.

So all I'm saying is the consequences of Watergate and Vietnam, much more Watergate, I think, are yet to be analyzed. There is a whole series of events-the fall of Vietnam itself, Angola, substantially deteriorated US-Soviet relationships-they are all, I think, at least in part a consequence of the weakness that derives from the Watergate period. Watergate was a major blow to the ability to conduct our foreign policy in any coherent way. I think there's no question about it.

End of interview